

Chief bid a formal farewell

□ Mike Slyter ends long career in law enforcement on high note

By Cameron Hardy
Post-Record Staff

Camas Police Chief Mike Slyter retired Friday, leaving what many of his colleagues believe is a legacy of great police officers and an excellent facility to utilize for years to come.

Slyter has plans to spend more time hunting and fishing and more time doing one of his passions — woodworking. Incoming Police Chief Don Chaney said Slyter is a handyman who enjoys woodworking and building cabinets. He also enjoys elk hunting.

An extremely private person, Slyter, even on his last day in the public eye, denied requests for personal interviews. His coworkers, however, were free with praise and information about their friend, supervisor and longtime law enforcement officer.

Slyter was born in Portland and lived in several places around Oregon and Washington before coming to Camas. He graduated from Camas High School and is one quarter shy of his bachelor's degree. He also attended Clark College and Portland State University.

Carol Buck, the sex crimes detective for the department, has known Slyter since about 1982 and they started working on cases together in 1986.

"He's one of the best cops I've

worked with. He has a great talent and rapport with suspects," she said of his police work.

She recalled a time when he was booking a criminal and before the interview got underway, Slyter took off his gunbelt and said to the man, "Guns scare me, don't they scare you." She said he was always finding a way to keep things light, recalling an interview with a suspect one afternoon when she looked up to see Slyter doing a moon-walk past her doorway.

Buck said that Slyter was an excellent administrator who was also a good friend. She said he could balance the two very well.

"We always knew where we stood whether good, bad, or indifferent." She noted that he backed his people 100 percent. "He's extremely well respected around Clark County in law enforcement."

In addition, she said he was extremely supportive during a personal crisis she went through, reminding her to take care of her family first and let him care for the details at work.

Aside from being a police professional, Slyter was noted by his colleagues as having a humorous side, which was equally well-respected.

"He loves a well thought out practical joke," said Buck. She said he showed up at her house one time riding a moped and dressed like a biker — complete with leather, riding

boots and a chain.

Chaney told a story about Slyter in which he and his fellow officers dressed like paramedics in order to catch a criminal who was hiding out in Camas. The suspect was known to be armed at all times, so the officers responded to the man's residence in an ambulance saying there was a report of a heart attack at the address. After convincing the person at the door that someone inside may need help, they were able to take the man into custody. He was found napping

that Slyter has left a legacy of good people and a beautiful police facility to use. Don Chaney, incoming police chief, and several officers also celebrated their promotions. *Staff photo by Cameron Hardy.*

inside the house with a gun under his pillow.

Chaney said that he and Slyter were the "Starsky and Hutch" of Camas in the 1970s. They drove around in a 1973 Ford Torino and wore civilian clothes while making

drug busts.

Early in Chaney's career, the two were riding together around Camas when Slyter told him about what police work meant to him.

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"Mike was training officer and we were working the graveyard shift. We pulled up at 18th Loop where you can see the whole city and he stopped. We had grown tired of talking about police procedure and the like and he reminded me how proud he was to be a police officer because people trust us," relayed Chaney. Slyter told Chaney that the residents could be comfortable in their homes sleeping

at night because they were there doing their jobs.

In a ceremony at the police station Friday, Lloyd Halverson, Camas city administrator, said he could only think of one other city employee with a 25-year pin besides Slyter and new police chief, Chaney. Chaney received his pin and his chief's badge at the promotion and retirement ceremony.

Early in his career, Slyter was involved in a shootout at Smead's Tavern where a gunman shot at the young officer through a window before making his way to the front door of the tavern. He was poised at the corner of the building waiting for the man to come out. The suspect took a shot at the police officer but his gun misfired and Slyter gunned-down the man with a shotgun, killing him.

He and his wife, Sandy, will now have more time to spend together. They have a son, Shawn. The Slyters live in Vancouver.

A ceremony was held for Slyter and Chaney last Friday at the Camas Police Station. About 100 people were in attendance to congratulate the retiring chief. Also promoted at the ceremony were Paul Pearce to captain and Mitch Lackey to sergeant. The newest police officer was also given his badge.

